

## **DIVAS Healthy Lifestyle Projects Kick Off Weight in Teen Girls**

### ***Issue***

For over six years, Ms. Monika Carey-Green Executive Director of DIVA, Incorporated watched teenage young women in her program use food as one of the ways to cope with stress. Candy bars, potato chips and soft drinks were used as comfort foods. Over the years, she saw the young ladies' physical activity levels decreasing, junk food intake increasing and waistlines expanding.

According to the 2007 South Carolina Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) 14 percent of high school students are obese. The percentage of overweight and obese children has more than doubled since the early 1970's. Ms. Green knew these unhealthy behaviors were placing the young women at risk for many chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes and decided she needed to do something about it.

### ***Intervention***

DIVA, Incorporated is a non-profit 501©3 community organization in Columbia, S.C. that teaches young ladies and women how to make positive life choices. Thanks in part to the All-Health Team award that was given through Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant, DIVA, Incorporated was able to expand its Healthy Lifestyle Project to include more young women. During 2007-2008 school year, the group:

- Coordinated healthy lifestyle workshops, physical activity routines and distributed materials to several public housing units and an alternative school;
- Purchased 15 hoola hoops and two professional double dutch ropes;
- Developed a committee to coordinate ongoing workshops and health related activities;
- Partnered with Columbia City Parks and Recreation to sponsor first Super Woman Conference in March 2008; and

### ***Impact***

The participants in the project made positive lifestyle changes. They have increased their physical activity and improved their eating habits. The project yielded the following results for 2007-2008:

- Two participants each lost up to 17 pounds;
- One participant improved her borderline Type 2 Diabetes status;
- A total of 95 women and their daughters attended the Super Woman Conference and received information about healthy eating and physical activity; and
- Fourteen young women from a local alternative school were enrolled and started a "Fightin' the Fat" program.

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